



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE ESCURIAL.



FTER leaving the city of Madrid, the train sped into the arid plain that surrounds it. Scarcely a sign of vegetation appeared, except where a few stunted acacias, small and half dead, and with the trenches about their roots hard as baked clay, served to make the dryness more positive. Trenches are dug about the trees everywhere in the dry sections of Spain, but even this artificial means of keeping them alive is by no means always successful, and one often sees long rows of trees without a sign of a green leaf on their withered branches. But while the sense of natural fitness was thus violated through the absence of water, the colour of the landscape to an artist was full of beauty. The sky was pure blue, and scintillated with tremulous heat, while the rounded outlines of the distant Guadarramas was of a most delicate and pure violet shade. Long lines of purple shadow, which marked the irregularities in the surface of the landscape, broke the ochre-colours of the dry fields in the foreground about the railway; and so multiplied were the tints of sienna, of pale buff, orange, and gold, that, at the same instant when one pitied the poor husbandman for his fruitless toils here, one could but sigh with pleasure that such a mass of barrenness should be so beautified by colour.

But time rolled along with the advancing train, and, after about a dozen miles of such scenery as this, we found ourselves among the spurs of the Guadarramas, the mountains which surround the plain in which Madrid stands. Round, low, and bristling with dark, jagged rocks, these spurs of the mountains made one think of the unkempt heads of giants:—

"Grey-haired Saturn silent as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair."

Deep ravines divided the ranges of hills, and the imagination was alternately swayed between the ideas of a Titanic world, and the thoughts of the brigands which each hill might easily conceal, or for whom any of the piles of rock, so profusely scattered around, might serve as a retreat. Not a sign of a human habitation appeared to disturb the intense loneliness of this place, but great granite boulders were everywhere seen, and the weather-stained points of the rocks crenellated the outlines of all the hills—

"... Rocks profusely hurled,
The fragments of an earlier world."

Not only, as we said, had we seen no drop of water anywhere hitherto, except when, at the little stations, the women of the country offered us *agua* from their picturesque earthen jars, but scarcely a sign of moisture had anywhere been visible. Now at length, among the rocks, however, at the bottom of the ravines, here and there a standing pool appeared, green and stagnant, and looking more like the broth of some preadamite monster, a fit genius for these weird, rocky hills, or the eyes of a Cyclops, than like pure water, fresh and cool.

But by-and-bye these scattered spots of water grew nearer together, and at length they were seen to unite by a slender thread which led from one gully to another. These shrunken threads of water apparently mark the beds of torrents, for old stone bridges across the gorges of the mountains in many places above them show how the winter storms may swell these streams.

Nothing more scowling or more grim could be conceived than this desolate place, on which, in the midst of the carnage and battle at the fight of St. Quentin, the imagination of Philip II. had dwelt with religious bigotry, as a suitable spot in which to erect the monastery of San Lorenzo el Real; and which he vowed to build if the battle terminated favourably to himself. If a natural scene could typify a human mind, the hard, cold character of the king could scarcely have taken a better form than this for its outward expression, so weird, so scowling, and so terrible, were the hills and the grim, rocky defiles; and yet over all stooped the cerulean heavens and the golden sunlight.

But now, like a sort of climax and focus to these natural characteristics, when the train swept through one of the gorges of these

hills, far away in the distance, though it looked near at hand in the clear atmosphere, relieved, and at the same time blending, with the ragged mountains behind it, rose the sharp towers of the grey "Escorial." Was it indeed the palace-monastery, the mind demanded of the eye; or was it merely a larger mass than usual of the cromlech-looking piles of granite? But the lofty dome now defined itself, and the thousand windows, like the eyes of some huge animal, appeared, and we saw that we were indeed approaching the great palace-monastery.

Soon we alighted from the train, and, over a stone road that wound to and fro up a hillside, an omnibus, pulled by mules, took us slowly to a portal of the palace.

A small town clustered at the foot of San Lorenzo, and one of the gates of the monastery opened directly on the narrow street. But the great pile of the building itself dominated the town completely, and San Lorenzo was so large that it had the effect of being utterly alone, except for the suitable companionship of the neighbouring mountains, whose storms and whose winter blasts its massive walls could endure unscathed. San Lorenzo, or the Escorial, as it is usually called, is built in the form of a gridiron, as all the world knows, and a stranger can easily imagine that this shape means endless galleries and countless courts. Its high towers (one at each of the four corners) form the legs of the gridiron, while the royal apartments make the handle. But it was not the detailed history nor the plan of the building which interested us greatly, but that the monastery itself produced so strong an impression on our imagination from its being the work of a man so peculiar in character as Philip, whose personality yet seems to dominate the place, and from its own picturesqueness, that, however weak the mirror of it may be in words, we would fain draw the image.

When we entered the gateway, we heard feet echo in the long stone gallery in front of us. The side-walls, ceiling, and floor of this gallery, are all made of huge blocks of granite, and in a dim light we perceived a porter in uniform coming towards us, and then he sat down, lounging on a bench near by. The blocks of stone of which every part of San Lorenzo is built are very large, and in the course of our visit our guide, who was a servant woman of the place, and much preferable to a man, pointed out to us, in one of the chambers of the monastery, two immense pairs of iron scissors, brown with the rust of age, which were the same, she told us, that had served to deposit these blocks of granite in their places in the monastery walls. Her story might have been correct, but in first viewing the scissors, it had occurred to me that perhaps they were tongs that had been used in the time of the Inquisition; an idea which doubtless originated from our having just seen a terrible picture, attributed to Titian, of the burning of poor San Lorenzo, to whose memory this monastery is dedicated; and whom his tormentors were pinching with tongs, and poking with great iron forks above the horrible flames which curled under him. It was a sickening painting, which yet haunts our imagination.

Our steps now bore us into another long hall leading off from this one, on the side of which, rounded arched windows, with small, very old panes of glass in them, looked out into courts or gardens filled with tall box stiffly trimmed, in forms like the patterns of damask. Besides, we saw, beyond the parapet of the garden-walls, the ranges of dry, rocky hills, and the vista of the surrounding country. Opposite the windows, dark wooden doors, clamped with big-headed nails, stood open here and there, and afforded glimpses into the chambers of the monks, which were gloomy in shadow, and constructed, like everything else here, of a grey stone.

And now, swinging along with heavy strides, a monk advanced in a black dress, counting his beads as he walked. He was promenading down the gallery, and his expression was arrogant and self-contained, rather than sensual, as one so often sees on the faces of the priests and monks elsewhere. By-and-bye another monk joined this one, and they seated themselves on a bench, over which a fresco of the martyrdom of some saint was painted on the wall. This bench is the same one, probably, where other monks

may have rested a hundred, two hundred, or three hundred years ago, with the like surroundings as to-day, and with the same landscape scowling in upon them from the outside.

Footsteps sounded, and a soldier of the palace in gold livery clanked along with his spurs and sword. Two women with a very subdued mien, and their heads enveloped in the black-lace Spanish mantillas, strolled out of a side-gallery, and their manners indicated that they may, very likely, have belonged to the court, which at present occupied its own section of the monastery. Any idea of show or worldly gaiety struck us as so utterly foreign to the lonely and dreary spirit of the severe monastery that a stranger could hardly imagine light laughter, gay dresses, or even speech louder than a whisper within these walls, but which the sight of these ladies involuntarily suggested.

We have found everywhere in Europe a great respect shown for works of art, paintings, and sculpture, and especially by the ignorant. Cicerones insist on a stranger stopping to examine some coarse daub, when they will not let him see with any comfort the accidental effect of a picturesque corner made so by the lights and shades of Nature, or a fine contrast of daylight; or a view from a chance window. It was in strange discord with the stately gloom of the long galleries of the monastery that on the vaulted roofs and sides of some of them appeared very bright frescoes, generally of historical or religious subjects, and to the small details of which our attention was directed by our guide. We all know that Philip fostered the arts, and that the talent of the great Italian masters—of Titian, Tintoretto, and Benvenuto Cellini—was tributary to his orders.

But in this severe and scowling cloister bright pink, blue, yellow, and green, seemed singularly inappropriate, and the visitor at first might be led to imagine the colours were introduced here subsequently to the reign of Philip by some one less cultivated in taste than himself. But the dates and the subjects of the frescoes, as well as the guide-books, assured us that the paintings and the long halls belonged to the same period. Dim gold and bronze looked more suitable, and there was a grimness in the dull shine of them both where the rough surface of the coarse granite peeped through and flecked them over with a mottled shadow on the tops of the arches and around the heavy door-frames.

Up and down we followed our guide, and finally a colder breath of air than filled the rest of the building, even on this hot day of July, met our lungs, when she opened a small door and we entered the choir of the great, dim church in the centre of the pile of buildings. The choir was a very big room raised some fifty feet or so above the ground, and it had a granite floor, while a heavy, brass balustrade nearly breast-high bounded it where it looked down into the church.

On one side was an immense organ, and here is the wonderful marble crucifix sculptured by Benvenuto Cellini, and there are rows of dark, carved wooden stalls. A pile of huge illuminated missals were stacked around a great reading-desk in the middle of the choir, and their heavy silver or steel clasps and the yellowed parchment covers looked so old and worn that they might have been in use ever since the monastery was built. I dare say that such was the case, for in Spain they use the old manuscript missals to-day; the lovely wreaths of flowers, the angels, and the sacred history of the Bible, are seen in the antique parchment pages everywhere in the choirs and on the altars.

In a corner at one end of the long row of stalls our guide made us sit down in a seat that was used by Philip. And here he was accustomed to enter—or rather I *felt* that he *stole* into—the choir, through a little concealed door that formed a portion of the back of his seat.

There is a sense of *slyness* and espionage everywhere about the building, and in one of the great arched halls our guide, by whispering very low in one corner, was heard in the others with entire distinctness; and even the solid granite floor of the choir told its story, for, if any one stepped over a block of stone in the centre of it, the entire floor trembled and vibrated.

The light was dim in the church, and came from the great dome in the centre. Windows are contrived in bright colours behind some of the side-altars, and an angel, a crucifix, or an image of the Madonna here and there, stood relieved against a background of flame or of golden light, and looked strange and weird through the iron grill that barred the altar from the church itself.

I have said that dim gold or bronze seemed appropriate in San Lorenzo; so also the great rock-crystal chandeliers, whose rich, white brilliants formed birds of different species, such as peacocks with spread tails, pheasants, and other sorts, have a fit position.

In one of the side-altars behind an iron grating were chairs and kneeling-cushions, and there were some candles burning; and this was the resting-place of the young and gentle Queen Mercedes, who had recently been laid here. Whether her husband came hither to meditate and pray I could not learn; but it appeared so. Other side-altars and the great altar of the church itself, the latter with its splendid, dark-porphry steps, and the black-and-white pavement of the floor, looked cool and fresh under the light of the great dome which rose three hundred feet and more into the air. There was a profound silence in all parts, save where it was disturbed by the echo of a lonely footstep.

Outside the church the guide unlocked a door, and with a lighted candle preceded us down a long, winding flight of stairs. A little way along we looked out upon a landing and a court with a tall fountain, and then we slowly descended till we saw our guide standing in the middle of the mausoleum, the burial-place of the kings of Spain. The air was very cold, and the fitful flicker of the candle threw its unsteady gleam upon shelves placed one over another, and thickly filled with the sarcophagi of the monarchs. Over one of these old stone boxes, carved with its dim, gilt ornaments, I saw the name of Charles V.; and his successors were all lying near him. The mausoleum is shaped like the Pantheon at Rome, and has much fine marble in it. But the room looked small, and, though it did not smell like a tomb, the air was close and disagreeable.

Large as is the Escorial, the doors in nearly all parts of it are small and insignificant, and often a person of ordinary stature must needs stoop his head to pass from one room to another. The keys, the hinges, and the nails, which belong to the doors are heavy and often very elegant in workmanship, and the nails especially are set like jewels of all sorts of shapes, and thickly encrust the black, carved woodwork.

In one of the dark panelled sacristies, on one side of the great church, I was much interested to examine what was a dressing-room of the priests. A long chest of carved drawers extended the length of the room. This chest was about the height of an ordinary bureau, and a mirror above it framed in white rock-crystal had afforded the holy fathers of the monastery the chance to contemplate their faces or their costumes ever since San Lorenzo was occupied. On one end of the case of drawers a pile of embroidered lace and some red brocade lay heaped together, and I lifted an end of them to examine the rich figures that covered the cloth. The sacristan opened one of the drawers, that was half as long as the room, and from its black and worm-eaten depths drew forth an embroidered vestment stiff and heavy with gold. It was a garment made to hang down the back of the priest, and never before had I seen in church, museum, or palace, such a marvel of needlework.

It was covered by a scene in the life of Christ, and the faces and hands of the figures embroidered in silk resembled the finest miniature painting. Lovely, too, were the little birds and the wrought flowers, and I imagined the fingers of the nuns in Flanders or in Spain as they stitched away on their good works for the holy fathers of San Lorenzo three or four hundred years gone by.

If our women in America were only familiar with the sight of such work as this, it occurred to me, they might perhaps find more satisfaction for their talent in weaving similar stuffs for their own homes than in frivolous occupations that leave nothing behind them. Here, at least, in these various vestments was fine art of its own kind, and the rich combinations of colour, and the graceful and elegant forms endure to-day in all their freshness, while even Titian's pictures are darkening and scaling off from their canvas.

Sky-blue satins were here covered with flowery emblems, and I saw azure velvet also, while purple tissues were iridescent with each tint of the rainbow, with their figures of green trees, running rivers, and the aureoles of the saint in the baptism of Christ. I looked at a great many of these works, all reposing safely in the old drawers of the sacristy, and I reflected that, if only a very few such things were possible to be made in a lifetime, it were better to be the author of a little good work than to produce the quantity of

poor rubbish we are content with to-day. One such bit as any of these would be a glory to a house; but what can we say of the multiplied daubs on our own walls at home?

The sacristan locked up the old carved drawers, and we again wandered about the monastery.

I have said that the doors and windows of San Lorenzo were quite small—disproportionately so to the general size of the galleries and halls. I hardly observed a small, black, wooden door, which was, as usual, sewed thick with big-headed nails, till a young man, whom our guide had summoned, opened it and signed for us to enter.

There are three libraries in the monastery of San Lorenzo, and when we had filed through the low and narrow entrance we found ourselves in one of them. It is a very long room with an arched ceiling, and in the spaces above the bookcases the walls are painted in bright-coloured frescoes, which give them the same curiously new look which I had observed in the frescoes elsewhere. The pictures are of old historical and allegorical subjects, but, though they are very gay with blue, red, and yellow, I noticed that here and there the paint had peeled off, or a stain discoloured the bright tints.

Those of us who have seen it will recollect the splendid library of the Ducal Palace in Venice, which is one of the most impressive apartments in the world, with its gorgeous paintings and its great dimensions. This library of the Escorial lacks somewhat in sumptuous splendour, yet it is by no means unfit to take rank, even if it be less elegant, with the great library of the Doges. The books in Venice may be as richly bound as here, but in the bright light of a Spanish summer day, as they stood with their tops and their front edges, *not* their backs as is universal elsewhere, turned towards us, the heavy gold of the thick paper, and the yellow edges of the old parchment or leather covers, as we looked down upon them in their low cases, appeared sumptuous in the highest degree. Fine manuscripts are more conspicuously shown in Spain than are usually seen in other countries. All up and down the centre of this library are Arabic geographies, painted missals, and the Koran, besides multitudes of other manuscript volumes, treasures of literature as yet but little known, ornamented with margins of flowers and vines, and with the text written in luxurious finish in reds and blues as fine as if they had been done to-day.

Philip's own missal is shown here, and as we looked at his portrait, which is one of a few hung in the library, and felt the coldness of the harsh, granite walls of his monastery, it seemed as if it must have been for show, and not from any real love of Art, that the king preferred to handle anything so pure and lovely as this missal of his, which Perugino might have painted, or, for that matter, a sweet-souled woman, the book was so delicate.

In one of the picture-galleries, of which there are several, where are chiefly gathered paintings by Ribera, I found the finest Tintoretto I remember to have seen. The canvas is long, and hangs

opposite the windows, in a fine, clear light, and the composition is nearly as large as Paul Veronese's 'Marriage of Cana' in the Louvre. 'Christ washing the Feet of his Disciples' is the subject; and never shall I forget the grace in the grouping of the disciples, seated about a long table of a great hall, which looks out upon white-marble buildings and upon a canal. It is not true in architecture historically, but in its clear grey tones, so silvery and so clear, one felt himself again under a Venetian sky, and in one of the halls of that city whose light is so simple and so delightful.

The climate of Spain spares the pictures wonderfully well, but this has been preserved better than any other, and the rich tints of the men's dresses, of bronze colour, and russet and purple, and their noble and fine figures, have stamped the picture indelibly on our memory.

There are a great many misshapen and disfigured persons in Spain, as in every other country; and troubles in the eyes especially affect the Spanish people. When we had wandered about the old monastery till we were tired, and had crossed many of the little courts, in which were dripping stone fountains, and where box was growing, or where we merely found the stone pavement, our guide called a small boy to lead us out of the building. A queer little creature came stumbling along towards us. He was about ten years old, I think, and was very thin and pale. His face somewhat resembled that of a Chinese. One of his eyes opened only a little way, and was set very obliquely in his head. The other eye was entirely closed, and had shrunk so much that it appeared very doubtful if the ball had ever been properly formed in its socket. But the child was nimble and cheerful, and my companion, a prudent French maid, immediately proceeded to save her own strength by loading up our little cicerone with a big hamper of provisions we had brought with us for our dinner. The child conducted us the length of a long rising passage up under an archway, and at length we found ourselves again in the town. The basket of provisions was safe, but I had greatly feared for its contents, for the little bony arms of the child had held it pressed first against one side of him and then the other, while at each change I expected the contents of the hamper to be discharged upon the pavement.

The family of the king, at the time of our visit, occupied the royal apartments, so that we did not visit this section of the building. On another occasion, when his Majesty came out in the same train with ourselves to the "Escorial," alighting from his own especial car, which resembled our American palace-cars, only that it was smaller, we saw the king trip along briskly and enter the gate of the long private avenue that leads through the gardens of the monastery up to San Lorenzo. His coach was waiting for him, but he and one of the ladies of the court preferred to walk; and in my last view of San Lorenzo, Don Alfonso, the king, was slowly pacing along under the trees of his avenue, towards his home in the gloomy monastery.

SUSAN N. CARTER.

DINING-ROOMS.



PERHAPS there is no room in a house furnished on ordinary principles that so little expresses the purposes for which it is intended as the dining-room. It is too apt to be, what it is sometimes called, "the eating-room," and nothing more—its most prominent feature the unfortunate table, of telescopic propensities, so unmercifully condemned by Mr. Eastlake. A look of coldness and bareness seems inseparable from many dining-rooms, when this is the very room that should be pervaded by a warm glow of hospitality.

A needlessly profuse table is the usual expression of this virtue; but a few well-prepared dishes set forth amid cheery and tasteful surroundings are far more attractive than the boar's head and whole-sheep style of our far-away ancestors. An old book on furnishing actually puts forth the doctrine that the dining-room should contain nothing calculated to divert the attention of the

guest from the hospitable board of his entertainer—an article of belief that would seem to have found many modern disciples. The common practice of furnishing dining-rooms in green has much to do with their cold appearance, for green is eminently a cold colour; and the absence of any play of flame from the apertures in the wall that usually serve for heating purposes, gives a hard, set look to the stiff belongings.

Very charming pictures have been given of some real but exceptional dining-rooms—dining-rooms from grand English castles; or the mansions of American princes—that are of no practical use whatever to the householder of limited means, but with tastes that revolt at the desolate-looking dining-rooms of his neighbours. Many words, too, have been written on the subject of furnishing, which seem rather to tell the inquirer what not to do than to yield any satisfactory information; for representations of quaint and often utterly unattainable pieces of furniture, with a graceful knack